

intellectual integrity that he is ready to make such significant changes to his earlier published work.

Yet, as this quotation reveals, Macquarrie retains a keen interest in trying to “tease out” what he can about the actual lives of these saints: indeed, the sentence just quoted begins by saying “What is important is that Kentigern was a real historical figure” Macquarrie may be less willing to use hagiography as a source for saints as real historical figures, but he does his best with any other written source at his disposal. The paucity of reliable record makes this a desperately difficult task, however, and can often result in no more than a sequence of speculations. Saints may have been flesh and bone once upon a time, but for nearly all those who belong to the “age of saints” between the fifth and seventh centuries there is at best only the merest scraps of viable information about their actual careers. The material which *does* survive are the images of their sanctity constructed centuries later. For the historian, what is important about the saints of Scotland, therefore, is not that they were real historical figures, but that they were saints. It is what they meant as saints to some people at particular periods that we discover most fruitfully. This book goes part of the way towards exploring this aspect; I suspect, however, that a book in the future entitled *The Saints of Scotland* would be devoted much more to the twelfth century, when so many of the surviving saints’ Lives were written, than to the “age of saints” itself.

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Ayrshire and the Reformation: People and Change, 1490-1600. By Margaret H.B. Sanderson. East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1997. Pp. 193. £14.99. ISBN 1 898410 91 7.

Margaret Sanderson’s study of the reformation in Ayrshire reads as a book that has matured steadily for some time: always clear but balanced in its judgements, an impressive mastery of sources and yet keeping the point to be made always to the forefront. Besides, she acknowledges two teachers of the county as those who “first kindled my enthusiasm for history, social and religious”.

“Social and religious” describes well the two dominant themes. The first three chapters set the scene – describing the economies, institutions and families of Carrick, Kyle and Cunninghame; and then looking at their religious life before 1560. Sanderson is concerned to show the church as “The People’s Church”, the places of worship being “noisy places” where all sorts of business was conducted. The role of the burgh council of the town of Ayr in controlling their kirk is thoroughly discussed. So, too, is the role of the curates, the unpromoted clergy. Unlike a previous study of a local reformation (*Scotland Reformed – the Reformation in Angus and the Mearns* by Frank Bardgett, Edinburgh, 1989) Sanderson has been able to trace a good number of the curates, and can identify them as “usually from tenant families in the rural parishes or from burgh stock in the towns” – “normally locally born”.

These opening chapters close with a conclusion that highlights a key argument of *Ayrshire and the Reformation*: “Dissent, not simply dissatisfaction, was the ultimate cause of the demand for reform”. Margaret Sanderson’s reformation is very much a schism in the church. Personal commitment and strongly held religious and theological views form an important part of her explanation of the causes of events. She is conscious that in this she may represent a swing back to a concentration on the “content” of reform, as opposed to its “context”. “A purely confessional explanation of these events may no longer be acceptable, but it cannot simply be replaced by purely socio-economic or political considerations”. The course of dissent is traced through the families associated with the “lollards of Kyle”, theologically-motivated iconoclasm and the Anglophile assured lords of the 1540s, to the trial and execution of Adam Wallace and the missions of George Wishart and John Knox.

Local studies tread a difficult path when it comes to the interaction between local and national events. Somehow the reader – and both the “historian and the general reader” are in mind – has to be given sufficient understanding of the entire reformation crisis to see what is being said about the locality. It is a mark of the success of *Ayrshire and the Reformation* that its balance and narrative are seamless. The families, backgrounds and roles of such lairds as Campbell of

Kinzeancleuch, Lockhart of Bar and Chalmers of Gadgirth are clarified. The description of the process of reform in the burgh of Ayr, 1558-1559, including an attempt at a debate between the reformer John Willock and abbot Quintin Kennedy, is an important contribution to the narrative of the reformation in Scotland.

If *Ayrshire and the Reformation* disappoints, it disappoints in its treatment of the period after 1560. Only two chapters are offered, one on the new clergy – how many, who, where, where from – and one on the developing organisational structure and spirituality of the reformed church. Very little illustrative material comes from the last twenty years of the century, and Ayrshire's contribution to the national debates of these years is not attempted. Personal details do abound, however: and ministers' wives and widows are discussed as a supplement to Margaret Sanderson's revisiting of "Manse and Glebe". It is most regrettable that, from all the parishes of Ayrshire, no kirk sessions have survived from the reformation era, and only one baptismal register. The earlier study of Angus benefited considerably from the survival from 1560-61 of the Monifieth kirk register. Sanderson is forced to conclude, perhaps somewhat pessimistically: "The sources that remain to us from the early days of the Reformed kirk in Scotland simply will not bear categorical conclusions as to whether the people in those areas where the reformation was undoubtedly delivered, determinedly resisted or took wholeheartedly to the new faith and its outward observances".

Modern studies of the reformation in Scotland have concentrated on the east – Edinburgh, Perth, Angus, Aberdeen – with rare excursions to the Highlands of the north and west. Margaret Sanderson is right to remind us of Ayrshire's firsts: "the first native Scots laypeople to be tried for heresy, the first attempt to translate the Biblical text into Scots (prepared by a layman), the earliest recorded iconoclastic attack on church property in Scotland (led by a layman), and probably the earliest signs of the introduction of protestant worship by civic authorities (at Ayr)". She adds little to the well-rehearsed narrative of national events and does not enter into controversy with other writers on the period. Nevertheless, Sanderson's picture of the reformation is markedly more a straightforward movement for a change of religion than that presented, for example, by Michael Lynch in *Scotland: A*

New History, p. 186 (London, 1991). Using a multiplier logic that assumes many more people unknown to history were supporting those in addition to whose names have come down to us (as in her *Cardinal of Scotland, David Beaton c1494-1546*, pp. 78-9, Edinburgh, 1986) she speaks of a "consensus" being reached in Ayr, and denies that nationally, the Lords of the Congregation were simply a "mere faction or pressure group". (Contrast, e.g. *The Scottish Reformation*, p. 114, Ian B. Cowan, London, 1982).

Besides the important local story now told, the strength of this book is its attempt to understand people in their local context, allowing them to have sincere and passionate convictions underlying their attempts to reform their church. The notes trail a forthcoming paper, "The Evidence for Personal Belief in Sixteenth Century Scotland": this current book can also be seen as an attempt at the agenda set by Gordon Donaldson in his *The Faith of the Scots*, London,, 1990. The Appendix is a revised *Fasti* of Ministers, Exhorters and Readers in Ayrshire, 1559-1600: it would have benefited from a full analysis of the unions and linkages of parishes during that period.

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John Knox House: Gateway to Edinburgh's Old Town. By Donald Smith. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1996. Pp. 74. £6.50.

Donald Smith is to be congratulated for a book designed to be usable by visitors around the John Knox House in Edinburgh which at the same time offers a scholarly and perceptive work of history. Dr Smith is the first to acknowledge the considerable assistance of many others in piecing together that history, but he has been entirely successful in producing something to be read by the general public which will still bear the most critical scrutiny.

The book falls naturally into two parts, the first concerned with its building and early use, which Dr Smith traces through the sixteenth-century goldsmith families of Reidpath and Mossman. The particular alignment of the building he argues goes back further to around 1472, when a semi-fortified extension was made to an existing property as